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Congress of the United States

Committee on International Relations

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

January 3, 1978

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is assigned to

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full
☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to
Date Declassify on Reason

The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I would like to bring to your attention the question of the right of option to political prisoners in Argentina.

Apparently the Argentine Constitution provided a "right of option," by which political prisoners during a state of siege had the option to leave the country or go to prison. This provision was rescinded when the military regime came to power. Due to international pressure, the Argentine Government reinstated this option, but attached a legal clause by which the President could determine which political prisoners were eligible for this option, taking into account "the peace and security of the nation." From information provided to me, an estimated 20 persons out of 5,000 have been allowed to avail themselves of the right of option during the past year. The veto clause greatly undermines this right.

I would be interested in knowing what the position of the United States has been regarding the right of option clause for Argentine political prisoners. I would also like to know whether we have discussed the damaging effects of the veto clause with the Argentine Government.

Your kind attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Donald M. Fraser, Chairman
Subcommittee on International
Organizations

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